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DEPARTMENT OF VISITING NURSING AND SOCIAL WELFARE.



IN CHARGE OF
HARRIET FULMER

THE AFTER EFFECT OF SUMMER OUTINGS UPON LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE CONGESTED DISTRICTS

BY MABEL JACQUES

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THERE are very few people who at some time during the summer months do not see a crowd of children boarding a boat or a train to be taken away for a ten days' or two weeks' outing. Sometimes these children are pale, emaciated little cripples, being taken off to a sanatorium by the sea-side, where the salt air and good food will help to put color in their faces and flesh on their bodies; or we may find a crowd of apparently healthy little rowdies, typical street urchins, already bronzed and rosy from the city's sun, the type of children one sees capering to the music of a hurdy-gurdy. Perhaps one almost wonders why it is necessary for these children to be sent away at all, that perhaps they are keeping sickly ones from the benefit of the outing. This is rarely the case at the present day, when there are so very many places for the children to go to that it is hardly necessary for any poor child to do without the outing if he applies.

Just what does this outing mean to the children of the congested districts? I have already pointed out the benefit to be obtained by the crippled child from the sea air. Most crippled children are tuberculous, and it is to the sea-shore that these children are sent if possible. Here we find that old wounds are healed, little weak backs are strengthened, and much is done toward the prevention of the disease. The question, however, very naturally arises as to the continuance of this improvement when they return home. This is a most reasonable one, when people who are dealing with the admission of children to the institutions find the same children returning year after year always, apparently, in very much the same condition as the previous year.

Take also the children who are sent away for a country week, not necessarily sick children, but those gathered in from the highways and

byways of the slums, sent out to see God's country at some comfortable farm for one week of the sweltering summer. You wonder, perhaps, what one week can mean to these children, and we read in the joke columns of the daily papers the now rather trite stories of the little girl who refused to eat her apple pie at a farm house because there was no cheese and of the boy who cried because he missed the tall buildings. These and hundreds of similar stories we read and are told, but we hear less about the thousands of children who welcome the first sight of the green fields with cries of delight, and whose one week is a continual round of wonder and enjoyment for them; who, as soon as they reach home begin looking forward to the next summer and wondering if they will have the good luck to go away.

So much for the effect that the outings have directly on the child. There is, however, a still greater result,—the influence that the child unknowingly exerts over his family and associates upon his return.

To the casual observer this possibly is hard to realize, but visit the houses of these children before they go away, and a few weeks after their return go again. Do not expect to find a whole family reconstructed,—where there was filth, absolute cleanliness; where there was crowding, plenty of space. This would be phenomenal. But there are little ideas that these children bring back with them. The following incident shows the smallness of these ideas and yet the great influence for good that they eventually bring about.

While taking a girl of seven years from the station to her home one day last summer, I questioned her about what she had done while away. She had been to the Gwynedd Home for Convalescent Children, one of those model institutions that the country is blessed with. She told me the good things she had to eat, of the flowers they picked and the games they played, and then, drawing her little figure up, in a proud way, she added, "And they made us brush our teeth every morning and night," and quick as a flash she drew from a newspaper package a bristling object, exclaiming, "See, they gave me a toothbrush all of my own to take home." The passengers on the car laughed, never dreaming of the untold good the little toothbrush was to do.

Just a year later I visited the home of that child to make arrangements for her to go away again. "Shall I take the toothbrush?" she asked, almost the first thing. Upon my expressing surprise that she still had the brush, she said, "Oh, my father got me a new one and my brother and sister have one too." Further questioning revealed the fact that all the members of the family had them, and, what was better still, used them; and it did not stop there, for every child had

his or her own particular friend, and this child's friend must do as she did. What a great deal of disease in this world is due to dirty mouths and teeth, and what a wonderful thing is being accomplished by keeping one family and a neighbor's with clean mouths!

I found a little Italian girl industriously cutting down her eldest brother's and father's shirts. Upon my inquiring as to the cause of this, she exclaimed, "To make nightgowns for my little brother and sister, like they do at the sea-shore." She had been away one week, and never before had gone to sleep in anything but the clothes which she had worn all day. I could recount many more stories, all rather similar in their meaning, and all emphasizing the good influence upon general living conditions that summer outings and visits to the sea-shore sanitarium undoubtedly exert.

ITEMS

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PERHAPS the most important event to nurses engaged in district nursing and social welfare work is the fact that Miss Waters' book on "Visiting Nursing in the United States" has been put into the publisher's hands. Reviews of the book will follow in an early number of the *JOURNAL*, but it is worth remarking at this time that the book marks an epoch in an important phase of nurses' activities and is certain to be impressive to its future readers. It shows from cover to cover painstaking, conscientious labor in its compilation; and future thesis writers will, no doubt, give many a sigh of relief that information, which up to this time was inaccessible, has been placed within their reach. Its record of fine achievements must add dignity to the nursing profession.

The book, however, is not a compilation only. The brief historic outline, the arguments, the principles, have been presented with attractive simplicity, and most important of all is the wide range of the nurse's usefulness that has been more clearly presented than ever before.

GRADUATE nurses inspired to obtain more complete preparation for their work are to be found enrolled in the Hospital Economics Course at Teachers' College, and in the Schools of Philanthropy. There is evidence on the part of the nurses of an awakening to the need of further social education to meet the large demands for social welfare work now made by the general public.

It is gratifying to know that the nursing profession is making ready to take its full share in the stupendous movements of the times for civic righteousness and social uplift.